

Remarks at a Campaign Rally for Governor Jon S. Corzine in Camden, New Jersey

November 1, 2009

The President. Thank you so much. I am—whoo—fired up! I am fired up. Let me first of all acknowledge some extraordinary public servants who are in the house: Rob Andrews, our wonderful Congressman; Steve Rothman, another great Member of Congress; Gwen Faison, the Mayor of Camden. Thank you, Gwen. To all the other elected officials who are here, I am just glad to be back in Camden. When I was campaigning last year, I said I'd come back once I was President. I couldn't stay away. I like—I just like hanging out in New Jersey.

I appreciate all of you who aren't at the Giants/Eagles game. [*Laughter*] I didn't mean to stir all that up, I'm sorry. All right, settle down now, settle down.

Here's the reason I'm back. I am back because we are 2 days away—2 days away from making sure that New Jersey has the kind of quality leadership it deserves, two days away from making sure we're moving forward on education, two days away from making sure that we've got fairness in our economic system, two days away from reelecting Jon Corzine for another 4 years—2 days.

Now, at this point in the campaign, you've heard all the arguments. You've seen all the TV ads. You know all the facts of this race. You know that Jon's running for reelection during a challenging time for New Jersey and a challenging time for America. I don't have to tell you that. You——

Audience member. Obama, I love you!

Audience member. Me too!

The President. You know how tough things are because you see it in your own lives. You see it in your own communities. You see it right here in Camden: too many folks who are out of work; too many people who are looking for a job; too many hard-working families being squeezed by skyrocketing costs of everything on one side and shrinking wages on the other side.

You've got men and women who've worked hard all their lives, done all the right things, and now they're worried about whether they're going to be able to send their kids to college or retire with dignity and respect, whether they can be the kinds of providers they want to be, all because of economic factors beyond their control.

Everywhere you go, you talk to people, and they say, "You know, I was saving up all my life; I had it in a 401(k). Suddenly because of this financial crisis, I may have to go back to work." Young people say, "Well, maybe I've got to put off college for longer than I had hoped."

So I know these are challenging times. Jon knows these are challenging times. This is why he got into public service. He didn't do it for the paycheck. He did it because he understands that we can do better. And for the past 4 years, you've had an honorable man at the helm in this State during one of the most difficult periods in its history. You've had a leader who's put the interests of hard-working New Jersey families ahead of the special interests. You've had a leader who's fought for what matters most. That's the kind of Governor Jon Corzine's been.

And that's the kind of Governor that he will be for another 4 years if everybody here does their job.

Now, you know there's a lot of silliness during campaign season, a lot of distortion. So let's just make sure everybody understands the record. Let's make sure we all understand Jon Corzine's record and what's happened over the last several years, because, you know, opponents' records kind of get distorted a little bit during the course of a campaign. This is a Governor who provided more property tax relief than any Governor in New Jersey history—more than any Governor in New Jersey history. So when you hear these other folks talking about how, oh, you know, Democrats are tax-and-spend, and, oh, you know, Corzine, he's putting a big tax—this is the guy who delivered more property tax relief than anybody, right here. So if you care about fairness in the tax system, this is the guy you're going to vote for.

You hear the other side talking about, oh, they want to expand government. Jon Corzine is the first Governor in 60 years who reduced the size of government—reduced it. But he understands that when you're going to reduce government, when you're going to lower property taxes, you don't do it with a hatchet, you do it with a scalpel. You cut out things that don't make sense so you can keep on doing the things that do make sense.

So here's a guy who expanded early childhood education for more than 5,000 children because he understood that pre-K isn't babysitting, it's a pathway to success for young people. This is a guy who expanded the Children's Health Insurance Program by nearly 100,000 young people in this State. Think about that: one hundred thousand kids getting health insurance that didn't have it before because of Jon Corzine.

New Jersey is now a leader in clean energy. And working families can spend time with a newborn baby or a sick loved one because of paid sick leave that was signed into law by—guess who—Jon Corzine. When it comes to the issues that matter, like jobs, Jon Corzine's been a true leader, the first Governor in the country to pass a recovery plan to get the State's economy moving.

Now, listening to Jon's opponent, you'd think that New Jersey was the only State having a tough time right now. He doesn't seem to mention that we're in the—coming out of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. And guess what? That crisis didn't start under Jon's watch. It wasn't a consequence of Obama policies or Corzine policies that we went into this hole.

There seems to be some selective memory going on here, some revisionist history about how we ended up in the situation we're in. This crisis came about because of the same sort of lax regulation, the same sort of trickle-down economics that the other guy's party had been peddling for years.

And I've been saying all over the country, I don't think it's right for those who helped get us into this mess to be somehow standing back and saying, "Well, why haven't you fixed it?" I don't mind grabbing a mop and cleaning up somebody else's mess. That's fine. Jon Corzine doesn't mind cleaning up somebody else's mess. But don't stand there and say, "How come you're not holding the mop the right way? How come you're not mopping fast enough? Why are you using a socialist mop?" [Laughter] Why don't you grab a mop? Grab a mop.

We don't need politicians who are more interested in scoring points than solving problems. We don't need politicians who are offering the same answers that got us into the mess in the first place. We don't need politicians who'd rather sit on the sidelines and point fingers than offer any answers, any real solutions. We need leaders who are committed to

moving this country forward. We need leaders who are committed to moving New Jersey forward. And that's Jon Corzine, which is why you need to work hard on Tuesday.

I served with this man in the United States Senate. I learned about the kind of person he is, somebody who served this country as a United States Marine, somebody who worked his way up from a middle class family to achieve extraordinary success and then decided to give back to this country and this State that he loves. He's committed to giving every American the same opportunities he had. He was one of the best colleagues I had in the Senate, but he's also one of the best partners I have in the White House. We work together. We work together.

When we were putting together the Recovery Act, we worked together to figure out, how can we put people back to work as quickly as possible, how can we make sure we're not cutting vital education programs and not laying off cops and firefighters and teachers all across the country. And that Recovery Act that we designed has put a middle class tax cut in the pockets of 3 million hard-working New Jersey families. It's extended unemployment insurance for 600,000 men and women in this State. It's made COBRA 65 percent cheaper so people can keep their health care when they lose their job.

Jon Corzine helped get this done. Now, look, the reason you're here, the reason I'm here, the reason Jon's running for reelection is we know our work is far from over. You know we still got big challenges ahead, in New Jersey, here in Camden, and all across America. We're not going to rest until we solve them.

And by the way, we're also not going to pretend that they're going to be easy. One of the things you've got in Jon Corzine is somebody who tells it to you straight. There are all kinds of folks out there who will pretend, well, you know, there are a bunch of simple answers there. These are tough times. Rebuilding Camden, that's not going to be easy. Anybody who says it is isn't telling you the truth. Digging ourselves out of this financial hole, that's not going to be easy. Anybody who says otherwise, they're not telling you the truth.

But when you have somebody who's giving it to you straight and then says, "But I'm confident if we work together we can make it happen, and I'm not going to rest until anyone who's looking for a job can find a job and a job that pays a living wage"—when you've got somebody who says, "I'm not going to rest until not only is Wall Street doing well but Main Street is doing well and businesses are hiring again. I'm not going to rest until every young person in America is getting a world-class education and every American's dream is within their reach if they're willing to work for it and fight for it. I'm not going to rest until we build a clean energy economy that's going to free our Nation from the grips of foreign oil and generate green jobs right here in New Jersey. "I will not rest until every single person in America can afford to get decent health care."

That's the kind of Governor you're looking for. And you've got him in Jon Corzine. That's what we're fighting for in Washington, DC. That's what Jon's fighting for right here in New Jersey. And he's going to keep on fighting if you give him a chance on Tuesday.

Now listen, if you ended up showing up at this rally, let's face it, I'm preaching to the choir here. *[Laughter]* I know you're going to vote on Tuesday. But because this is a tough period in our economy, because it's tough here in New Jersey right now, there are a lot of people out there who understandably feel cynical, you know, who think that change should happen overnight. All of you are going to have to be ambassadors for change. All of you are going to have to be out there explaining that it's hard work, but if we turn out to vote on Tuesday and

we put in somebody who we know is on our side, then we can continue the progress that this extraordinary State has made.

You know that's what's going to be required. And so I just want everybody here to know, yes, you are going to vote on Tuesday, but I need you to go back into your neighborhoods. I'm going to need you to knock on doors. I'm going to need you to make phone calls. I'm going to need you to do the same thing you did last year. You're going to have to go talk to your family members. You're going to have to get Cousin Pookie off the couch and tell him, "Pookie, it's time to go vote." [Laughter] You got Cousin Pookie; you know who I'm talking about. Everybody's got one of those. [Laughter]

But if everybody here understands that working hard for 48 hours could end up putting New Jersey on a pathway of success for the next 4 or the next 8, the next 16, the next 32, then I know you're going to do the work.

And so I'll just close with a story I may have told some of you guys a while back, but it's always a reminder of why it's so important for you to work so hard, because many of you now take for granted that we won the election. But back when I was starting our election, you guys couldn't pronounce my name. [Laughter] Nobody gave us a chance. Nobody gave us a chance. Everybody said it was going to be too hard for a guy named Barack Obama, only 4 years in the Senate—how is he going to win the Presidency?

So I remember—yeah, everybody now says, "I believed," but back then you all didn't believe. [Laughter] So I went down to—South Carolina was an early State. I don't know if you remember. South Carolina was one of the early States like Iowa and New Jersey or New Hampshire. New Jersey was a little bit later. And so—[laughter]—I'm going to have to go talk to this young lady over here. Let me tell my story. [Laughter]

So I'm in South Carolina, and I've gone down there to campaign. Nobody knows me. I'm at some legislative banquet. I'm sitting next to a State rep there, and I'm begging her, you need to endorse my candidacy for President. She looks at me. Finally, she says, "You know, I think I will endorse you if you are willing to come to my hometown of Greenwood, South Carolina." Now, I must have had a glass of wine that night because I just right away said, "Okay, I'm coming. I promise."

Only to find out later that Greenwood is an hour and a half from every place else. [Laughter] You cannot—you can't fly straight into Greenwood. So about a month later, I come back, and by this time, I'm full-bore into the campaign. I'm exhausted. I've been campaigning 16-hour days in Iowa and New Hampshire. And I get in about midnight, get to the hotel by about 1 o'clock. I'm dragging my bag. I'm going into my hotel room. And suddenly my staff taps me on the shoulder and says, "Mr. President, you got to be up at 6:30 a.m. in the car." I say, "Why is that?" He said, "Well, we got to go to Greenwood like you promised." [Laughter] So I said something that I can't repeat here—[laughter]—because, you know, I don't want anybody to punish Jon Corzine for my language.

So the next morning I wake up, and I feel awful. I'm exhausted, just beat. And I stagger over to the window hoping to kind of open the shades, kind of wake myself up. It's pouring down rain outside, miserable day. I go get some coffee and the newspaper, I open it up, there's a bad story about me in the New York Times. [Laughter] I go downstairs after I've packed up, and as I'm walking to the car, my umbrella breaks, and the rain pours down, and I'm soaked.

So by the time I'm in the car, I'm wet, I'm sleepy, and I'm mad. [Laughter] And we're driving, and we're driving, and we're driving, and it takes forever to get to Greenwood. Finally,

we get to Greenwood, although you don't know you're there right away. [*Laughter*] And we pull up alongside a little park district building. It's tiny. We walk in, and lo and behold, after this extraordinary journey, there are only 20 people there. It wasn't like a crowd like this. And they're all looking kind of wet and mad. [*Laughter*]

So I've got a job to do. I'm shaking hands: "How do you do? What do you do?" Suddenly from behind me I hear this shout: "Fired up?" And I'm stunned; I'm shocked. And everybody else around me, though, acts like this is normal, and they all say, "Fired up!" And then I hear this voice, "Ready to go?" And everybody else says, "Ready to go!"

And I look behind me, and there's this little woman there, about, I'd say, 50, 60 years old. She's got—she looks like she just came back from church, got a big church hat. [*Laughter*] And she's grinning at me, and she's looking at me, and she says, "Fired up?" Turns out, she is a city councilwoman from Greenwood, South Carolina, who's famous for her chant. She's well known for—at events, she goes around, and she starts saying, "Fired up?" "Fired up!" "Ready to go?" "Ready to go!" This is the thing she's known for. She also moonlights as a private detective. This is a true story—true story. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, for the next 5 minutes, she just keeps on chanting. "Fired up?" "Fired up!" "Ready to go?" "Ready to go!" She starts putting some twists on it. "Barack Obama/is going to be/the next President!" And she keeps on doing this. "Fired up!" And I realize that I'm being upstaged by this woman. So I'm looking at my staff, and they're all, "We don't know what's going on." [*Laughter*]

Here's the thing, though, Camden. After about a minute or two, I start realizing I'm feeling kind of fired up. [*Laughter*] I'm starting to feel like I'm ready to go. And for the rest of the day, whenever I saw my staff, I'd say, "Are you fired up?" They'd say, "I'm fired up, boss. Are you ready to go?" I'd say, "I'm ready to go." [*Laughter*]

Here's my point.

Audience member. Fired up!

The President. Here's my point. That woman's voice, one voice, changed the room. Now, if one voice can change the room, it can change a city. And if it can change a city, then it can change a State. And if it can change a State, it can change a country. And if it can change a country, it can change the world. Your voice can change the world. Your voice can change New Jersey. Your voice can change Camden. Your voice will get Jon Corzine 4 more years as Governor of New Jersey. And he and I will partner with you to make sure that every child gets a good education, everybody has health care, everybody has a job that pays a living wage. That's what we're fighting for. I need you to work, so I'm going to ask you, Camden, are you fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Let's get to work. Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:35 p.m. at the Susquehanna Bank Center. In his remarks, he referred to New Jersey gubernatorial candidate Christopher J. Christie; South Carolina State Rep. J. Anne Parks; and Edith Childs, city council member, Greenwood, SC.

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